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FWP Fact Sheet Montana Wolf Delisting

Wolves are recovered in the Northern Rocky Mountains

- The Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolf population met biological recovery criteria in 2002.
- The decision to remove the wolf from the federal Endangered Species List takes effect Friday, March 28, but legal challenges are already underway.
- In the meantime, FWP and the respective Indian Tribes are now the lead agencies for wolf conservation and management in Montana.

Wolf Delisting and Montana

- Federal rules require Montana to maintain a minimum of 100 wolves and 10 breeding pairs.
- Today, about 420 wolves inhabit Montana in about 73 packs and 39 breeding pairs.
- The population is increasing an average of 28 percent per year.
- With delisting, the line separating Montana into the northern Endangered Area and the southern Experimental Area no longer exists.
- Montana will have one legal classification of wolves as a “species in need of management.”
- Montana laws protect wolves. Wolves can only be legally killed:
 - during an official hunting or trapping season
 - if the wolf is killing or threatening to kill pets or livestock
 - to protect human life.
- Such incidents must be reported to FWP in 72 hours.

Wolves, Livestock and Pets

- Montana livestock producers can non-injuriouly haze or harass a wolf, or kill a wolf that is seen killing or threatening to kill livestock or pets on both public or private land.
- The flexibility to protect livestock and pets is provided in Montana law and is in the defense of property statute that pertains to mountain lions or black bears caught damaging private property.
- Similar to lions and black bears, a wolf seen actively biting, wounding, chasing, harassing, or attacking livestock could be killed.
- Such incidents must be reported to FWP in 72 hours.

Wolf Hunting Season

- Montana's FWP Commission recently adopted a wolf-hunting season for 2008.
- In light of legal challenges, however, wolf-hunting licenses will not be sold until Montana is assured a season can and will occur.

- Wolf hunting in Montana would be closely managed by harvest quotas, which must be approved by the FWP Commission. Quotas would establish a total number of wolves that could be taken by hunters.
- Wolves would be carefully monitored before, during, and after the hunting seasons to determine how the wolf population responds.
- Season dates were set for a backcountry wolf season in four Wilderness Area hunting districts to run Sept.15-Nov 30. A general wolf season would run Oct. 26- Dec. 31.
- A wolf trapping season is not being considered at this time.

Wolf Monitoring

- Through the year, FWP seeks to verify new wolf activity, determine if packs den, whether they had pups, and if at least two pups survived to the end of the year.
- FWP will continue to report to USFWS the minimum total number of wolves, the number of packs of two or more wolves and the number of breeding pairs.
- FWP monitors all wolves handled for routine health and disease. The collection of tissue samples and radio telemetry helps to monitor wolf dispersal and genetic diversity.

Cost and Funding

- Montana's wolf conservation and management is expected to cost about \$1 million a year.
- To fund wolf management, Montana will continue efforts to secure federal funding and combine it with revenue from the sale of wolf hunting licenses, private sources, and other in-kind contributions.

Federal Oversight for Five Years

- Montana will annually submit wolf population status reports to USFWS for five years.
- USFWS will examine how each state carries out its management plan and state laws.

Wolves Can Be Relisted

- Four scenarios would lead the USFWS to initiate a status review to determine if relisting was warranted:
 - 1) if the wolf population falls below wolf population recovery levels of 100 wolves and 10 Breeding Pairs in either Montana, Idaho, or Wyoming.
 - 2) if the wolf population in Montana, Idaho, or Wyoming falls below 150 wolves or 15 Breeding Pairs in any of the states for three consecutive years.
 - 3) if the wolf population in Wyoming outside Yellowstone National Park falls below seven Breeding Pairs for three consecutive years.
 - 4) if a change in state law or management objectives would significantly increase the threat to the wolf population.